D.C. OFFICES CAN NOW BUY SUPPLIES ONLINE

By Trudy Walsh, GCN Staff
August 4, 2003

The District of Columbia brought its $71.5 million e-procurement system online last month for 254 users who work for the chief technology officer and the city's contract procurement office.

The system will save the city about $34 million a year, said Sandy Lazar, director of key systems for the CTO. Savings will come from better contract terms and the elimination of paper exchanges between people and departments, he said.

The e-procurement system is one piece of the District's Administrative Services Modernization Program. ASMP, launched last year, is running on schedule and under budget, Lazar said.

"The prettiest sound in all of IT is the sound of silence," he said. "That's what happened when we went live." In the first week, the system processed $4.1 million worth of requisitions.

The first transaction, on a Saturday, was an order for a printer. It was delivered by Tuesday. Paper-based procurement would have taken three weeks from order approval to receipt, Lazar said.

Funds committed

When someone requisitions an item, the e-procurement system spends six seconds checking to see if there's enough money in the account. Then it commits the funds so that nobody else can spend them, Lazar said. The city is scheduled to roll out e-procurement in three more offices today: Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, and the Corrections Department. The system is slated to be deployed at all 56 city agencies by year's end.

Lazar said all the ASMP modules should be finished by mid-2005, including human resources, budget and planning, payroll, time and attendance, property management, and pension and benefits administration. The remaining 18 months of the five-year contract will be spent on maintenance and support, he said. Fifty vendors are working on ASMP along with 300 city employees, Lazar said.

The modernization vendors include Accenture LLP of New York, which provided the technical infrastructure; Ariba Inc. of Sunnyvale, Calif., which supplied application software; Keane Consulting Group of Boston, which is working with District employees on program management; SeeBeyond Technology Corp. of Monrovia, Calif., the software integrator; and Unisys Corp., the procurement system implementer.

By Roger Hughlett, Staff Reporter
August 1-7, 2003

The District's $71.5 million project to overhaul its entire computer system is becoming a reality.

Two more D.C. agencies—the Office of Contracts ad Procurements and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer—have just started using the new online procurement and management system.

Department of Consumer Affairs, Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department and Department of Corrections are set to start using the new system on Aug. 4, says Sandy Lazar, director of key technologies for D.C.'s OCTO (www.octo.dc.gov).

"We're moving forward on time and under budget," Lazar says. "We're on track to have the entire government online by the end of 2005."

Establishing new computer systems for all local departments and agencies is no small task for the folks in charge of building the systems or the government employees who have to change the way they do their jobs. But, D.C. officials say it's all part of their plan to make the District a national leader when it comes to showing how technology can improve city services for citizens and businesses.

The project, known as the Administrative and Services Modernization Program (ASMP), was designed to improve how the government handles everything from buying goods and services to managing human resources and payroll.

"We're totally modernizing and integrating the business processes of those areas and systems so that they flow horizontally through the agencies," Lazar says.

The two agencies using the procurement system ordered $1.4 million worth of goods and services within the first week of using the system, officials say.

That translates into $1.4 million in sales for companies now as opposed to later, and there is no time like the present for making a sale.

Point And Click

When the parks and recreation department needs to order more trash bags for city parks, someone from that agency used to fill out the necessary paperwork and wait for as many as three weeks before someone in the procurement office approved the purchase.

Then, the trash bags were ordered and eventually delivered to the department.

That is just the type of time-wasting process online procurement targets, experts say.

With an online procurement system, a department employee logs into the system, finds an approved vendor from the database—and orders. The product and the company selling it has already been approved. The vendor wouldn't make it into the database if it wasn't approved.

"It saves time and it saves money," Lazar says. "It's helping District employees get back to what they should be doing—serving the people and businesses." Folks in the tech firms that design and install online procurement systems say the District's initiative means quite a bit to their top lines.

D.C. OVERHAULING BIZ SYSTEMS

By Dibya Sarkar
December 18, 2002

During the next five years, Washington, D.C.'s city government will modernize how it manages its finances, buys goods and services, and provides benefits and human resources information to its employees.

The city is embarking on a $75.1 million initiative called the Administrative and Services Modernization Program (ASMP), which will revamp core business areas — human resources, pension and benefits administration, payroll, procurement, property management and budget — in all agencies that provide services.

"We're totally modernizing and integrating the business processes of those areas and systems so that they flow horizontally through the agencies instead of having stovepipe offices," said Sanford Lazar, director of key systems in the city's Office of the Chief Technology Officer, adding that it's a "classic" enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementation.

Officials estimate the city will save about $150 million across the board through efficiencies, aggregating purchasing and getting better discounts. Employees will be better served through self-service human resources and payroll and "spend a lot more time providing services," he said. The systems affect 25,000 employees, he said, adding that the ERP project does not include the school system.

Accenture is the prime contactor on the project, which will be deployed in several phases. Beginning in February 2003, the city will begin implementing Ariba Inc.'s procurement software and shortly thereafter will begin installing Oracle Corp.'s core human resources software.

Lazar said that requests for proposals have been issued to choose integrators for each function. The property management application was awarded to Archibus Inc.

The city is using a client/server architecture, Lazar said, and will integrate its legacy systems with new IBM Corp. and Sun Microsystems Inc. servers with Microsoft Corp. Windows 2000 for Web services and Unix for application and database servers. That environment will be tied together with SeeBeyond Technology Corp.'s eBusiness and Application Integration product.

D.C. officials began looking at modernizing core business functions about 18 months ago. They completed a study of business practices, then issued recommendations and cost/benefit analyses. Earlier this year, officials began examining each function individually, involving hundreds of city employees and high-level agency leaders in interviews, meetings and focus groups.

Lazar said the city formed a project management office that will oversee ASMP's implementation. He said the city is buying the hardware and software as needed just before an integrator begins work. If it bought everything at once, then it would have to pay licensing fees and maintenance as it waited for the complete integration of systems.

City officials also are paying close attention to city employees. They have developed a "very sophisticated outreach program" — sending out posters and postcards and holding brownbag lunches to get feedback on the project. It will conduct surveys every 90 days during the life of the project to find out what workers think and what recommendations they may have.

Lazar said the city will provide extensive training for all employees prior to any application going live.

"We've gotten significant support from the leadership, agency directors and employees who have participated," he said, crediting a high-level steering committee led by City Administrator John Koskinen.

D.C. REVAMPING ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

By Trudy Walsh, GCN Staff
December 19, 2002

The District of Columbia's Administrative Services Department will spend $71.5 million over the next five years to modernize and replace its paper-based administrative systems, said Sanford Lazar, the District's director of key systems for the chief technology officer.

The systems to be replaced include procurement, human resources, budgeting and property management. About 20,000 District employees will be able to access the new enterprise resource planning system over the Web, Lazar said.

The department now processes personnel actions and procurements using layers of carbon paper, Lazar said; a single purchase order can go through as many as eight steps and approvals before it is paid.

The city is working with SeeBeyond Technology Corp. of Monrovia, Calif., to integrate the data in its existing mainframe systems, some of which are 20 years old. The company will use its integration business suite middleware, written in C and C++, said Thomas Craver, a senior account executive with SeeBeyond.

There is no single prime contractor for the project, Lazar said. Accenture LLP of Chicago is integrating the hardware and software. Another company, Keane Consulting Group of Boston, is working with District employees on program management.

District officials estimate the new system will save the city about $150 million during the five-year implementation period, and then about $55 million each year thereafter. Some of the savings will come from increased efficiency, Lazar said. "We'll be able to aggregate purchases and eliminate redundant work," he said. "In a paper-based system, there's a lot of time and effort spent on tracking that whole scenario of, I sent the form, did you get it?' This system has guaranteed tracking."

TECH UPGRADE SPARKS HIGH HOPES IN D.C.

By Sean Madigan
Dec. 13-19, 2002

D.C. is getting ready to roll out the first phase of a $70 million overhaul of its administrative computer systems.

It's not sexy—it's mundane office functions—but city officials say the upgrade will let city workers focus more time on their primary jobs and less time on administrative tasks.

"It's streamlining and integrating the basic business of the District," says Sandy Lazar, director of key systems in D.C.'s Office of the Chief Technology Officer (www.octo.dc.gov) and head of the program.

About 18 months ago, the city started work on the administrative services and modernization program, and in February it will roll out the phase for procurement and core human resources systems. The entire program, which will include other functions, such as payroll and property management, will be in place by 2005. Program officials say the old system was expensive to maintain and required "excessive manual intervention."

Contractor Tom Craver summed up the program as the "guts of the District's business back-office stuff."

Craver is a McLean-based account executive for SeeBeyond (www.seebeyond.com), one of the contractors on the project. SeeBeyond's piece of the pie is relatively small—$980,000—considering the size of the entire contract, but the California company's function is critical: SeeBeyond provides the technology for the systems to talk to each other. Craver says D.C. will be a model for other government entities.

SeeBeyond already has a number of state and federal customers using its integration technology, including Los Angeles and San Diego counties, the Defense Department and the Social Security Administration.

Other companies that have worked on the city's tech upgrade program include Accenture and Keane Consulting Group.